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Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79T00912A002700010002-8

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Africa Review

16 February 1979

Secret

RP AR 79-007
16 February 1979

Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79T00912A002700010002-8

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AFRICA REVIEW (U)

16 February 1979

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Somalia: Exile Activity (U)

Two Somali exile groups opposed to President Siad's regime plan to meet in Addis Ababa this month in an attempt to join forces. The anti-Siad effort, which enjoys Cuban, Soviet, and Ethiopian support, is not yet a serious challenge to the Somali President. Ethiopia, however, probably hopes to use the groups eventually to undermine Siad's position and limit his eagerness to support Somali guerrillas in the Ogaden. (S NF)

The participants at the Addis Ababa session will include longtime political exiles and military officers involved in the coup attempt against Siad last April. The political members of this group formed the core of the Somali Democratic Action Front, a political organization that has received limited support from Ethiopia and Israel. It was formed a few years ago to oppose Siad and the Soviet presence in Somalia and has pledged to return "democracy" to the country. The movement, which was never very large, collapsed with the outbreak of the Ogaden war in July 1977. (S NF NC OC)

The military group is under the command of Colonel Abdallah Yusuf, one of the leaders of the April 1978 coup attempt in Somalia and one of the country's more qualified officers during the Ogaden war. His force, which consists of about 2,000 people, was recruited mainly from Somali exiles in Djibouti and Kenya. The group has been equipped by the Ethiopians, possibly funded by the Soviets, and receives some training from the Cubans, although most of the training is provided by former Somali military personnel. Yusuf's forces have been used by the Ethiopians in limited combat against Somali guerrillas--the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF)--in the Ogaden and have conducted minor harassment in the border area of northern Somalia. (S NF NC OC)

For now, the exiles pose little, if any, threat to the Siad regime. They have not fared well in clashes with the WSLF, even when accompanied by Ethiopian regulars. The exiles' limited tribal support, as well as their

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willingness to fight the WSLF, whose cause is supported by the vast majority of the Somali population, undercuts their ability to garner support within Somalia. In addition, their close identification with the Ethiopians and their Soviet and Cuban allies also has an adverse impact on their chances of rallying a significant following at home. There have been reports that the exiles in return for Ethiopian support will renounce Somalia's irredentist claims in the region--a cornerstone of Somali policy. If this occurs, the exiles' potential will further diminish. (S NF NC OC)

Although Ethiopia probably continues to distrust the exiles, it believes they are capable of eventually stirring up unrest within Somalia, especially in the north. If the exiles can be developed into a viable military and political force, Addis Ababa probably believes they could highlight Somalia's military weaknesses, undermine Siad's position, and eventually precipitate his ouster. In addition, the Ethiopians may feel that any fighting between Somalis in the Ogaden could strain the tribal fabric of the country and cause an upheaval that will affect Mogadiscio's ability to foster unrest outside its borders. (S NF) (SECRET NOFORN-NOCONTRACT-ORCON)

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Liberia: Foreign Policy Concerns (U)

Liberian President Tolbert has long felt Liberia--as Africa's oldest and most experienced republic--has an important role to play on the African stage. To this end, Tolbert has been active in mediating African disputes and has attempted to attune Liberia's foreign policy more with other nonaligned African countries. Tolbert, however, remains a man of temperate views and wants to preserve Liberia's close ties to the United States.* His assumption next July of the chairmanship of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for one year--Liberia will host this year's OAU summit--gives him an opportunity to play a far larger and more active role as an African leader, while serving as a moderating influence useful to US interests. (C)

The Liberians have already invested considerable time, money, and prestige in preparing for the July OAU summit. Tolbert regards his forthcoming OAU role as a golden opportunity for Liberia to reduce its political isolation, to polish its nonaligned credentials, and to project itself as a model to other Africans for orderly political and economic development. (C)

For too long, Tolbert believes, Liberia has been denied its rightful role as a leading African spokesman and recognition for its uninterrupted stability. He chafes under the reputation that Liberia has long had in the eyes of many African leaders as an American satellite unable to pursue an independent foreign policy. Tolbert, since becoming President in 1971, has tried to

*Liberia was colonized in 1822 by freed American and West Indian slaves and has enjoyed close ties with the United States since it became an independent nation in 1847. The Liberians tend to see the "special relationship" as obligating the United States to provide Liberia with the sort of facilities European powers left behind in their former African colonies. The United States in turn has unique interests in Liberia, including strategic access to a major port and airfield. The United States also has important diplomatic and military communications facilities in Liberia serving US needs. (C)

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rehabilitate Liberia's image by giving the country a far more active foreign policy oriented toward Africa and the Third World. Still, he has preserved the essential elements of Liberia's "special relationship" with the United States, which provides a source of important economic aid and potential military protection. (C)

Tolbert's OAU leadership will reflect several well-established tenets of Liberian foreign policy. These include:

- Strong opposition to white minority rule and apartheid, but with a preference for dialogue rather than confrontation in southern Africa.
- Support for peaceful settlement of African disputes and maintenance of the territorial integrity of African states.
- Noninterference in the domestic affairs of other nations.
- Opposition to outside interference in African affairs, coupled with extreme wariness of Soviet and Cuban activism in Africa.
- Concern for human rights and arms control.
- Desire for more equitable international economic arrangements. (C)

It is likely that Tolbert, as OAU chairman, will feel compelled occasionally to voice more radical stands to reflect the African consensus than he might take solely as the representative of Liberia. Tolbert would like to see the United States take an even stronger line on African affairs, especially on southern Africa, and as OAU chairman, he will probably push this line with the United States even harder. He will be disposed to respond favorably to US policy initiatives in Africa, but not at the risk of getting out in front of such key OAU members as Nigeria and the frontline states on particularly sensitive issues. Tolbert has carefully maintained

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a dialogue with as many parties in southern Africa as possible to avoid being identified with any single faction among liberation group leaders or their frontline backers. (C)

More than anything else, the OAU chairmanship will allow Tolbert to play his self-styled role as a mediator and honest broker among African states. Tolbert likes to present Liberia, with its nonaligned posture and special ties to the United States, as a bridge between the more radical African leaders and the West. During the past year, for example, Tolbert played host to a summit meeting in Monrovia that reconciled leftist Guinea with the moderate governments of Senegal and Ivory Coast. He has also helped to promote reconciliation between Angola and Zaire, and Angola and the United States. (C) (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Ivory Coast: The China Equation (U)

President Felix Houphouet-Boigny told a closed session of the country's ruling party last month that Ivory Coast will soon establish formal diplomatic relations with China. The President is expected officially to announce his decision in late February or early March, at which time the Taiwanese diplomatic mission in Abidjan



President Felix Houphouet-Boigny¹
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will be asked to close. Taiwan, considered by the Western-oriented and staunchly anti-Communist Houphouet to be a trusted friend, has long played a vital role in Ivory Coast's agricultural development. Houphouet's decision to open relations with China--the result of domestic and African pressure--will leave Malawi, Lesotho, South Africa, and Swaziland as the only African nations that still recognize Taiwan. (S NF NC OC)

Taiwanese Cooperation

Houphouet has long distrusted China and considers it to be an outlaw nation bent on subversion. This has contrasted sharply with Houphouet's close ties and ideological affinity with Taiwan. The Taiwanese have made a solid and invaluable contribution to Ivorian agriculture as a result of a five-year-old development program. This program brought Taiwanese experts to Ivory Coast to help carry out and supervise rice, fruit, and vegetable projects. Ivory Coast

¹This picture was taken from Problems of Communism, January-February 1978.

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also benefits from trade with Taiwan. Taiwan's exports to Ivory Coast include textiles, fishing products, and electrical machinery equipment, while it imports Ivorian cotton, maize, soybeans, and lumber. (S NF NC OC)

Houphouet's Apprehension

Despite his suspicions about China, Houphouet apparently decided to establish relations with Beijing in order to broaden his country's diplomatic influence with other black African nations. Houphouet is also being pressured by younger Ivorian party members who feel the country's traditionally conservative foreign policy should be more progressive. (S NF NC OC)

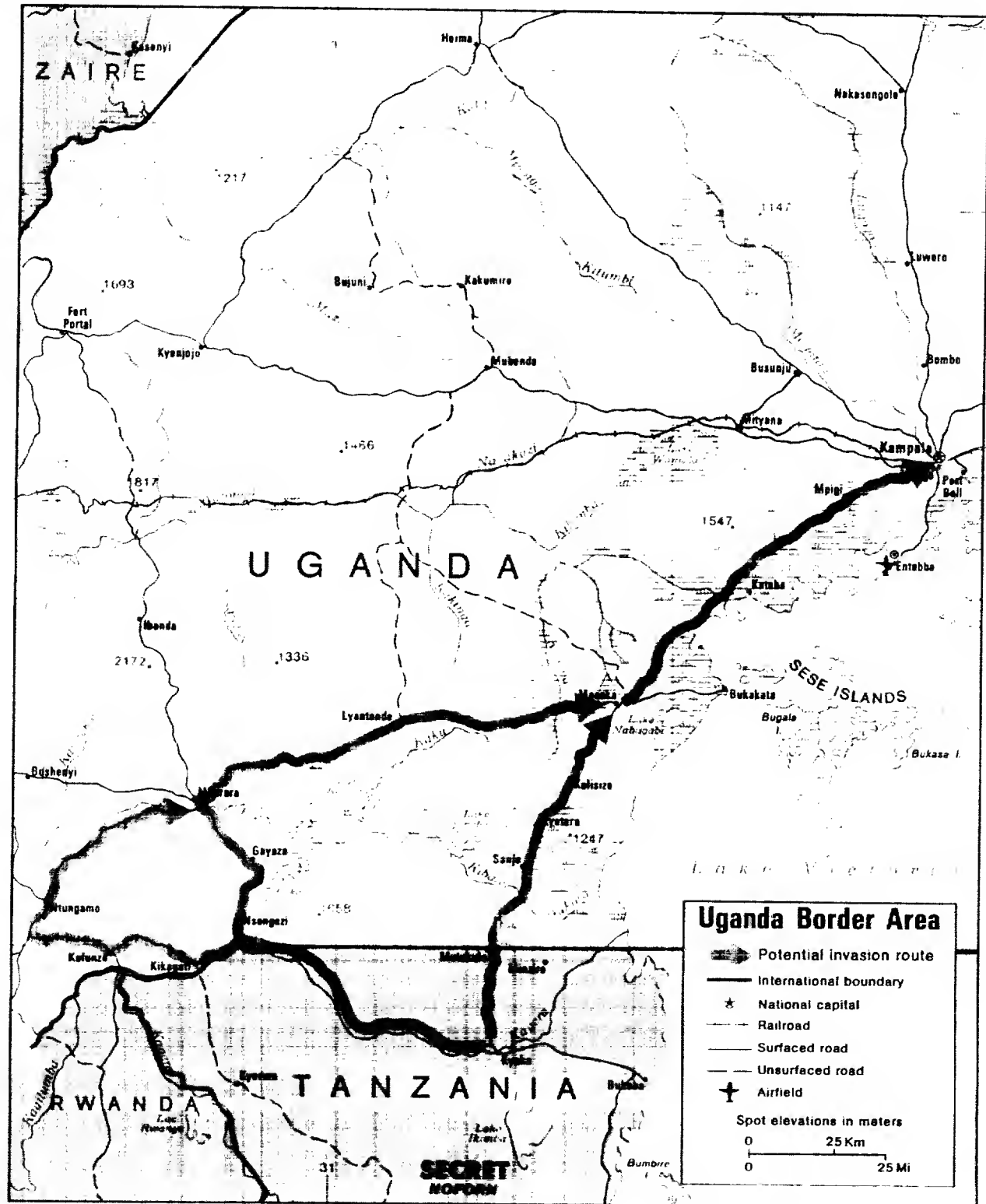
If it were acceptable to Beijing, Houphouet would probably prefer to maintain official ties with both China and Taiwan. Houphouet realizes that Beijing can contribute very little to Ivory Coast's agriculture programs, which will suffer from the Taiwanese departure, and Houphouet will probably try to encourage many of the Taiwanese experts to remain in the country. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that China will be able to offer Ivory Coast any new agriculture programs. (S)

Ivory Coast's relationship with Beijing will be cautious. Houphouet will probably keep a close watch on the Chinese and limit their activities within Ivory Coast in the hope of keeping Communist ideology in check. Given the unhappiness of younger Ivorians with Houphouet's conservatism, Ivory Coast's relationship with China will probably improve when the 73-year-old leader passes from the scene. (S) (SECRET NOFORN-NOCONTRACT-ORCON)

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Tanzania-Uganda: Impact of Geographic Factors
on the Tanzanian Offensive (U)

Tanzania has some 30,000 troops in the Tanzania-Uganda border area west of Lake Victoria. Last weekend Tanzanian forces, supported by tanks and artillery, began a four-brigade push into Uganda with the objective of capturing Mbarara, Masaka, and perhaps Kampala. (S)

Weather

The current dry season--January and February--which ordinarily is the best time for conventional military operations--appears to be ending sooner than expected. Heavy rains reportedly have already fallen in the area. Unless strategic objectives are reached in the next few weeks, military operations will be severely hindered by miry roads and flooding in low-lying areas. (S)

Terrain

Cross-country movement in most of the area between the Tanzanian border and Kampala is difficult because of numerous marshes, rivers and streams, and poorly drained areas that flood during periods of heavy rain. Movement is precluded in the valleys of the Ruizi and Katonga Rivers and in an extensive area around the mouth of the Katonga by papyrus marsh that restricts vehicular traffic to the existing roadway. (S)

During the drier months conditions for cross-country movement are only fair in scattered areas in the low hills south and east of Mbarara; portions of the hilly region are unsuited because of steep slopes. Near the shore of Lake Victoria swampy conditions preclude off-road movement. During the winter months miry soils severely slow or preclude off-road vehicular movement for periods ranging from hours to days, and cross-country movement is inhibited by dense forest in areas south of Mbarara. The movement of substantial conventional military forces through this area would be confined to existing roadways in most places. All roads in the area would require extensive maintenance if subjected to heavy military traffic over an extended period. (S)

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Tanzanian avenues of approach of Mbarara and Masaka are located in the eastern and central border areas. The Mutukula, Kyotera, Masaka axis in the east appears to be the most direct and suitable invasion route. As of 14 February the Tanzanian forces on this route had reportedly moved as far as Kyotera. (S)

The road from the border at Mutukula to Kyotera (43 kilometers) is gravel, two lanes, and in good condition. During the drier months the road can handle about 1,550 metric tons per day, while in the wet months the daily capacity decreases to about 520 metric tons or slightly over 100 truck loads. The road from Kyotera to Masaka (47 kilometers) can handle 6,550 metric tons per day in dry periods and 5,250 metric tons per day in wet periods. (S)

In the central area the best route extends through Nsongezi to Mbarara and east to Masaka. As of 14 February, the Tanzanians on this route were 20 kilometers outside of Mbarara. From Nsongezi to Mbarara (55 kilometers), the earthen road is in poor to fair condition. From Mbarara to Masaka (150 kilometers), the road can handle 6,550 metric tons per day in the dry months and 5,250 metric tons per day in the wet periods. (S)

A third, and less likely, alternative is the far western route from Nsongezi to Mbarara via Kafunzo and Ntungamo. While the road itself is better than the central route, it is 90 kilometers longer. We have no confirmation that the Tanzanians have used this route. (S)

The eastern axis from Masaka to Kampala (150 kilometers) is in good condition. Its capacity is about 7,380 metric tons per day in the dry months and 5,900 metric tons per day in wet periods. (S)

Conclusion

- The reported onset of heavy rains make the border area poorly suited for cross-country military operations and restrict vehicular movement to roadways that in many places are built on embankments. (S)

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- The lines of communication from Dar es Salaam to the Uganda border are long, but appear adequate to handle the current level of military activity. The rains expected over the next three months, however, will make maintenance difficult and sharply reduce the capacity of some road segments. (S)
- The road from Masaka to Kampala crosses many marshy valleys on embankments or causeways that form choke points that could be easily defended or cut by Ugandan troops. (S)
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ABSTRACTS OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

South Africa: Status and Prospects of the African National Congress (U)*

The African National Congress (ANC), lacks the leadership, organization, and trained manpower to play a significant role in destabilizing South Africa in the immediate or near future, although its capabilities have increased in the past two years and may continue to do so. (S)

- The ANC's military capabilities were minimal until 1976, when the Soweto riots sent substantial numbers of embittered young blacks into exile. (U)
- With military aid from the USSR, Cuba, and East Germany, and funding from the OAU, ANC training now takes place in Zambia, Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique, Libya, and Cuba. (S NF NC OC)
- ANC leaders, many of whom are members of the banned South African Communist Party, believe that terrorism, civil disorder, strikes, and propaganda are the only practical means now available to break down authority within South Africa. (S NF NC OC)
- The ANC claims credit for about half the terrorist attacks inside South Africa since 1975, but the South African security forces have dealt effectively with the infiltrations. (S NF)
- The organization could become irrelevant if young blacks inside the country continue to organize civil disorders and other confrontations with South African authorities. (S)

*These key judgments are taken from Status and Prospects of the African National Congress, RP M 79-10082, February 1979. A copy of the entire text may be obtained from the author.

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